The Mockery of Madness: Laughter at and with Insanity in Attic Tragedy and Old Comedy

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The present paper poses the question of the different ways in which madness is laughed at—or with—in Attic Tragedy and in Old Comedy. What is the significance of each kind of "mad laughter"? I shall identify fundamental differences, related to the different kinds of character, mental aberration and dramatic conflict presented in each genre, and more broadly to the dramatic structure and function of each. A first distinction can be made between laughter *at* madness, which we see especially in tragedy, and laughter *with*, or embracing of, madness, which we experience in comedy. The second distinction is between two profoundly different understandings of and approaches to mental aberration: as intensely individual, "medical," affliction (in tragedy) on the one hand or as essentially a social problem (or sometimes blessing), with social consequences and, in some cases, social solutions (in comedy) on the other. In the process, we shall also consider the significance—and some of the complexities—of the "curse versus blessing" analysis; questions as to who directs the "mad laughter" and who are its audience(s) (the original audience of the play; onstage characters, mortal and divine; the modern reader); and some relevant features of the visual and physical depiction of madness—in particular the use of mask—in both genres.

Introduction

It should not have needed Plato to point out the dual, or rather the complex, nature of madness, to an ancient Athenian audience.[1] The deeply disturbing, multivalent role of *mania* ("madness," "frenzy"), as curse and blessing, is explored

1. The *locus classicus* on the "blessings of madness" is *Phaedrus* 244a–c (taken up again at 265a–c), alongside which one may fruitfully consider also the heightened and abnormal mental states in the erotic–philosophical pursuit of the *Symposium*; see now Vogt (2013) for a useful discussion focusing on the distinction between rational and pathological madness in Plato, on the basis of these and other texts. The connection between "manic" and "mantic" made by Plato is also explicitly stated by Euripides, *Bacch*. 298–99; and on tragic madness as divine inspiration or possession, see Saïd (2013) 386–87.

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with a great variety of ramifications, in a wide range of dramatic contexts, in both tragic and comic plays of the fifth century. A first approximation to an answer to the question of the distinction between tragic and comic representations of madness would be: instances of madness are presented to us—and presented as an object of laughter—in Greek tragedy, but not in Old Comedy. There would be a considerable degree of truth in this; and it is a truth witnessed to by the much fuller discussion of tragic madness than of a comic counterpart in recent literature.[2] On the one hand, we have the figures of Ajax, Heracles, Cassandra, Orestes, and a range of mad characters in *Bacchae* (to which a number of less clear-cut cases could be added); on the other, arguably only Philocleon in *Wasps* as an example of serious mental aberration clearly so defined, in Aristophanes. The relationship of these instances to laughter is then a further question. As we shall see, there turns out to be some close connection between madness and laughter at almost every one of its occurrences in tragedy; and as I shall further argue, this "mockery of madness" undergoes a vital transformation in comedy.

Madness in Tragedy

We must first be more precise about the presence and nature of madness in the relevant tragic plays, before turning to its relationship to laughter. We start, then, with some distinctions of terminology and of type of mental aberration. "Madness" is the usual translation of Greek *mania* and cognates. (One may also add *lussa* and its cognates as virtual synonyms; and it is also the case that both nouns, though more often *lussa*, may sometimes be personified [Lyssa] and considered as the divine being *causing* the madness.) All the cases just mentioned from tragedy are explicitly (though not exclusively) described in terms of *mania* and/or *mainesthai* ("to be mad");[3] and in the present paper, when talking of "madness" in Greek texts, I shall overwhelmingly be referring to phenomena described by these specific linguistic items. *Mania*, and in particular *mania* as presented in tragedy, has a number of distinct, recurrent features, which we shall consider in detail presently.

Before we do so, we should also consider some other terms relating to mental or moral states in tragedy and comedy, but not corresponding to madness, or

2. See especially Padel (1995); Most (2013); Saïd (2013), and relevant material in Kyriakou and Rengakos (2016). Engagement with madness as a serious topic for consideration in tragedy can of course be traced back at least to Dodds (1951), which still provides a vital stimulus to discussion.

3. E.g., Soph. *Aj.* 59, 81, 956 (Ajax); Eur. *HF* 952 (Heracles); Aesch. *Ag.* 1064 and Eur. *Tro.* 307, 349 (Cassandra); Eur. *Or.* 37, 400, *IT* 85, 284, and *El.* 1253 (Orestes); *Bacch.* 33 (Pentheus). For detailed accounts of the terminology of madness in tragedy, see Padel (1995) 13–22; Saïd (2013).

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to the distinction between madness and sanity, understood in these strict terms. Especially relevant here are *phronein* ("to think, to have understanding") and its cognates. *Sōphrosunē* is usually understood as "self-restraint" or "moderation"; but its etymological significance as "soundness of mind or understanding)"—often also with a religious dimension, i.e., the correct attitude of reverence and moderation in relation to the gods—is also to the fore. Its absence is not straightforwardly considered as equivalent to madness in the above sense; indeed, such absence in some cases constitutes the culpable transgression that *leads to* a divine punishment by madness (for further on *sōphrosunē*, and on this phenomenon in particular, see below p. XXX).

The verbal formulation *eu phronein* (literally, "to think correctly," "to have good thoughts") thus has a similar semantic range. Negative versions—e.g., *kakōs phronei*, *ouk orthōs phronei* (lit. "s/he thinks unsoundly or wrongly")—denote an absence of this healthy mental attitude; whether in some cases they do amount to "insanity," or as virtual equivalents to *mainesthai*, is questionable; they will, however, also be relevant to our enquiry. *Anoia*, *paranoia* and similar terms are also used to describe a kind of mental aberration. The departure from normal perceptions or behavior—which may also involve transgression of social norms—referred to by such terms as *anoia* and *paranoia* certainly overlaps with *some* of the features of madness in its more precise designation; but in themselves these lack the very specific features of madness as typically presented in tragedy, that is as an episodic, violent and dramatic event.[4]

Conversely, we must also consider that there may be cases where *mania*-words are used less than literally. For example, Medea is reminded by the chorus that she sailed from her homeland "with maddened heart"; but, as I shall argue further

4. On the terms *to aphron* and *paranoia* in relation to *mania* in Plato, see Vogt (2013) 182; also Sassi (2013). I depart from Padel's view ([1995] 21) of the essential interchangeability of the terminology of *anoia*/*paranoia* and that of *mania*. Antigone is not presented as mad, but (by Ismene) as departing from rationality or common sense (*anous*, *Ant.* 99); similarly, Creon warns the chorus against becoming "both old and *anous*" (281). Neither usage contains any implication of madness in the distinct medical sense which we shall consider below. The negative *phren-/phron* compounds do seem more clearly associated with a definite state of insanity, as do certain descriptions of disturbances of the *phrenes*: πίπτων . . . ὑπ᾽ ἄφρονι λυμᾷ, "struck by delusion," Aesch. *Eum.* 377; φέρουσι γὰρ νικώμενον / φρένες δύσκαρτοι, *Cho.* 1023–24; φρενῶν ταραγμοὺς, Eur. *HF.* 836; σ᾽ Ἀπόλλων ἐξεβάκχευσεν φρένας, Eur. *Tro.* 408; τί τόδ᾽ αὖ παράφρων ἔρριψας ἔπος, "what is this wild utterance of your derangement," Eur. *Hipp.* 232. In this last case, we may wish to say that Phaedra is manifesting some features of tragic madness but is not actually mad; and cf. Soph. *El.* 472, where εἰ μὴ ᾽γὼ παράφρων μάντις ἔφυν means, simply, "unless my judgement as a prophet is wrong"; see further next two notes.

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below, she is not presented as in truth mad.[5] When we come to consider comedy, we must also bear in mind colloquial and idiomatic usages, e.g., of the phrase εἰ μὴ μαίνομαι (literally, "unless I am mad"), where any literal connotation of madness is rather distant.[6]

Tragic Madness: Recurrent Features

We proceed now to consider the specific and distinctive features of tragic madness. *Mania* in tragedy is typically presented as:

(1) temporary and episodic
(2) sent by a god as punishment for a perceived transgression
(3) manifesting specific symptoms of:
    (a) delusion (mistaking one thing or person for another) or hallucination
    (b) heightened, violent activity
    (c) wild eyes; shaking; frothing at mouth
    (d) intermittent loss of consciousness.

The above features have been well discussed in recent literature, as has the relationship (at least of 1 and 3) with accounts of madness in the medical tradition.[7] Here, I confine myself to re-emphasizing one well-established point and to drawing attention to one that has been less clearly observed. The first

5. μαινομένᾳ κραδίᾳ, Eur. *Med.* 432. The problematic case of Pentheus being accused of madness *before* he has been actually turned mad by the god (discussed further below) might also be taken as a looser or non-literal usage.

6. Examples (by no means exhaustive) of such idiomatic or non-literal usage are: μισῶ τὸν ἄνδρ' ἐκεῖνον, εἰ μὴ μαίνομαι (Ar. *Thesm*. 470: "*I'd be mad not to* hate that man [namely, Euripides]"); μαινοίμεθ' ἄν (*Thesm*. 196: "I'd be mad to").

7. See now especially Saïd (2013), identifying common features and also some distinctions between madness in Aeschylus and Euripides. As she suggests (392), while the "god-sent" analysis is common to both, Euripides introduces a simultaneous or alternative "internal" causation for Orestes's madness (*Or.* 396–400); she also (389–91) points out that the features listed at 3c are specific to the Euripidean, rather than the Aeschylean, account of Orestes. See also (esp. on features 1 and 2) Padel (1995) 3–10; 29–44; 197–218; 225–37; and Most (2013), focusing on hallucination or visual impairment as a key feature of tragic madness. Verbs—often active verbs—with the prefix *ek* emphasize the violent removal of a character from his or her senses—they have been made literally "out of their mind" (e.g, Eur. *Tro.* 408, *Bacch*. 36, 850). For a general Hippocratic account of symptoms of madness (referred to there by the terms μαινομένους and παραφρονέοντας), see *Morb. Sacr.* 1; and for the specific symptoms of the "sacred disease" or *epilēpsia*, which overlap considerably with those of 3c and 3d, *Morb. Sacr.* 10. Listed there are: loss of voice, choking, frothing at the mouth, teeth-clenching, convulsive motion, fixed eyes, loss of consciousness. More broadly on Hippocratic terminology and conceptualization of mental disorder, see Thumiger (2013) and (2017).

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is that it follows from such an understanding of madness that the agent is free from moral responsibility for actions performed while mad—at least in a fairly straightforward sense of "responsibility" (one in which it is understood in ethical rather than in religious or ritualistic terms). She or he may, on the other hand, be in some sense responsible—by having angered a god—for the actions which *led* to the madness being inflicted.

Such action incurring divine anger, or the mental state which brings about such action, is often characterized in terms of absence of *sōphrosunē*, a term which in a complex way combines the conceptions of temperance or chastity, of soundness of mind, and of knowing one's place in relation to the gods.[8]

The second, less well-noted, point is that while a range of behavior covered by 3a (and sometimes 3d) above is often presented directly on stage, that corresponding to both 3b and 3c—the more obviously physical symptoms and the violent behavior—is not; rather, it is relayed by eye-witnesses, usually in Messenger speeches. On the one hand, this is a natural consequence of the conventions of Greek tragedy: neither eye movements nor frothing at the mouth can be directly enacted in fifth-century masked theatre; and violent action is never, or almost never, presented on stage.[9] On the other, it may also have a deeper significance for the way in which tragic madness is perceived and received—and in particular for its relationship to laughter. We shall return to this point later.

I want to draw attention to two further recurrent features of the tragic portrayal of madness:

8. The complexity is intensified, of course, by the fact that *sōphrosunē* is a contested term appropriated by speakers for different rhetorical purposes in the dramas. The chorus towards the end of *Bacchae* sing τὸ σωφρονεῖν τε καὶ σέβειν τὰ τῶν θεῶν / κάλλιστον ("acting with *sōphrosunē* and honoring the gods are the best thing"), implicitly equating those two activities (cf. 314–18, 329) and identifying their absence as the cause of Pentheus's downfall. More problematically, in *Hippolytus*, while the title character conventionally (and misogynistically) insists on *sōphrosunē* in the straightforward sense of chastity (79, 667–68), the lovesick Phaedra almost diametrically reverses that sense, suggesting that Hippolytus "will come to share my sickness and learn *sōphronein*" (730–31). This must be taken either, sarcastically, to mean something like "let him try to be chaste then," or to be hinting at the alternative, religious sense of *sōphronein*, i.e., that it shows *sōphrosunē* to submit to the gods (in this case the goddess Aphrodite)—even though such submission might represent the opposite of *sōphrosunē* in the former sense. The Nurse's claim, οἱ σώφρονες γάρ, οὐχ ἑκοντες ἀλλ᾽ὅμως, / κακῶν ἐρῶσιν ("those with *sōphrosunē*, albeit unwillingly, desire bad things," 358–59) is also ambiguous, suggesting that those with conventional temperance may suddenly be smitten by Aphrodite with an uncontrollable passion, but perhaps hinting also, more troublingly, that such destructive passion may actually be a *consequence* of the conventional and "safe" *sōphrosunē* that aims to ignore her. (Cf. also n. 13 below, Heracles on "not thinking rightly.")

9. The relationship between tragic portrayals of madness and theatrical conventions and theatricality is also explored, in a somewhat different way, by Most (2013).

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(4) tragic madness is the affliction of an individual considered in isolation: its experience, and also its resolution (when this takes place), are presented as belonging to the individual alone, the latter typically involving either the direct re-intervention of the god who caused it, or a ritual act of expiation to be performed by the individual under direct instruction. There can, of course, be fatal or disastrous consequences of this affliction for those closest to the individual concerned, as most vividly shown in *Heracles* and *Bacchae*, both of which have as their climax the killing of a child or children by a parent. Indeed, there nearly always are. But these too are part of the punishment of the individual concerned. The madness itself is not conceived in terms of antisocial activity, or indeed of any ethically or politically significant behavior; it is, rather, dissociated from the normal operations of the agent.[10] (This relates again to the point about the absence of moral responsibility for mad acts.)

Indeed, the most politically problematic or antisocial—even sociopathic—behavior of mad heroes is in certain key cases performed *before* their affliction has started or *after* it has ended. In the former kind of case, the problematic behavior may constitute part of the cause of the madness, which is sent as punishment by an enraged god. Such is the case with Pentheus's impiety (and, according to the gods concerned, with those of Cassandra and Ajax); and, most strikingly, with Orestes's matricide.[11] Here, the action which we might consider desperate or pathological is not characterized in terms of madness at all—nor, indeed, is Orestes's extreme hostage-taking action in *Orestes* (1347–1624). In fact—remarkably, perhaps, from a modern perspective—both this and the matricide take place during his "sane" period.[12]

10. One may consider here the debated and problematic figure of the Sophoclean Antigone; and one might wish to argue that here we have a case of madness conceived in terms of antisocial or at least politically subversive behavior. As already argued, however (see n. 5, above), this is not presented as an actual case of madness. The soundness or not of their reasoning is, indeed, a matter rationally debated between Antigone and Ismene, and between Antigone and Creon, precisely in relation to *phron-*/*phren-* cognates (e.g., "excessively hard *phronēmata*," 473; "are you not ashamed to *phronein* differently from them?, 510"; the contrast between *kalōs phronein* as from the point of view of the living and from that of the dead, 557).

11. In Aeschylus's *Choephoroe* Orestes starts to feel confusion or derangement (1022–25) and to hallucinate (1048 onward) shortly after he has committed the matricide; at his first appearance in Euripides's *Orestes* he is suffering from similar symptoms.

12. Interesting in this context is Heracles's apparent summation of the moral of the *HF* 1425–26: "one who prefers wealth or power to friends does not think rightly (οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονεῖ)." While it is unclear in what way Heracles could have escaped the wrath which led to his madness, it does seem here that he is trying to identify a mentally balanced, or "sane," state which might lead to the avoidance of the kind of disasters that he has suffered. If so, however, it seems that this sane or balanced state is being contrasted with the kind of love of glory which may *lead* to madness (through divine wrath), not directly with madness itself.

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(5) tragic madness has some close relationship with laughter. This is true in a number of senses:
  (a) inappropriate laughter is a further symptom of mania;
  (b) madness is inflicted by gods in punishment for mockery;
  (c) one may be encouraged to laugh at persons suffering madness.

We shall proceed now to explore these senses more fully, continuing with our focus on tragedy. Before doing so, let us note that all the above features of madness as presented in tragedy, 1–5, are ones which distinguish it from the presentation in comedy. Madness there—to the extent that it appears—is not a temporary, episodic, divine punishment with sudden and fatal consequences; does not have a distinct, physical or medical typology; is not (overwhelmingly) an object of ridicule; and, as I shall argue, is considered rather in its dimension as a social problem than an individualistic one.

Tragic Madness and Mockery: Who Is Laughing?

But first, more on tragedy, and in particular on the relationship between madness and laughter.

Point 5a is comparatively straightforward, and essentially a continuation of the list of physical symptoms considered under 3. So, for example, Heracles at the onset of his madness is reported to have spoken "with a deranged laugh" (γέλωτι παραπεπληγμένῳ, *HF* 935).[13] Cassandra's madness, according to Talthybios, consists partly in the fact that, in her rationalizing speech on the positive aspects of her and the Trojan women's situation, she "laughs pleasantly at her own woes" (ὡς ἡδέως κακοῖσιν οἰκείοις γελᾷς, *Tro.* 406);[14] and in her earlier, actually manic, appearance, she outrageously encourages her mother to "dance and laugh" (χόρευε, μᾶτερ, ἀναγέλασον, *Tro.* 332). One also observes laughter as a prominent element in the behavior of the Bacchic revellers in *Bacchae*, both in their own and in the Messenger's account of it.[15]

13. Classical texts are cited according to the following editions. Aristophanes: Henderson (1998–2002); Aristotle, *Problems*: Mayhew (2011); Aeschylus: Page (1972); Euripides: Diggle (1981–94); Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*: De Lacy (1978–84); Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro*: Jones (1923); Pollux: Bethe (1900); Sophocles: Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1992). Translations are my own.

14. But there is, of course, a reversal here, whereby the apparently mad content of her speech will turn out to be true. The association between "being mad and laughing at one's own woes" is reflected also at Soph. *El.* 879–80, where Electra accuses Chrysothemis of doing both, in response to the latter's announcement of Orestes's presence (though this turns out to be a suspicion of madness, not a real instance).

15. A question arises here (related to the broader question of the positive or negative portrayal of Bacchic behavior in this play), whether or to what extent this laughter is the same "deranged" or "manic" laughter, or rather one which belongs within a peaceful, religious mode of life. See *Bacch.*

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To move to 5b: that madness is inflicted by gods in return for a human transgression is by now clear and well established; but it is also striking to what extent this transgression is characterized specifically in terms of *mockery*. Both this point and the next, 5c, are to be understood within an ethical landscape in which the humiliation of one's enemies, on the one hand, and the avoidance of one's enemies' laughter, on the other, are central imperatives of the heroic code. This general point itself does not need reiteration here, though it is exemplified particularly strikingly in a number of the "mad" plays with which we are particularly concerned, e.g., *Ajax*, *Medea*, *Bacchae*.[16] But the more specific relationship of the pairing of humiliation- or laughter-avoidance with madness is of particular interest. The relationship is especially prominent in *Bacchae*. Pentheus finds the Bacchic behavior of Cadmus and Teiresias at the outset of the play a source of "much mirth" (πολὺν γέλων, 250);[17] Teiresias notes that Pentheus is mocking or disdaining the new god (καταγελᾷς νιν, 286); and Dionysus himself responds directly to this mockery with the expressed intent both to punish Pentheus for his mockery (1080–81) and to make him an object of mockery himself (844); Pentheus, on his side, expresses the anxiety that above all things the Bacchants must not be in a position to laugh at him (842).

Of course, the drama of *Bacchae* presents us with a much subtler and more complex unfolding of mockery than that represented by those few citations: the whole, extraordinary "seduction" episode between Dionysus and Pentheus (912–70, foreshadowed also in their previous encounter, 787–846) shows the god subtly mocking or laughing at Pentheus in a way intimately related to the latter's state of delusion. Pentheus emerges ultimately as a straightforward object of mockery, and this mockery arises directly from his derangement: he is decked out in a woman's dress and boasting of the way he walks in it; he is enjoying visual and paranoid hallucinations; he interprets every step he takes further into the god's trap as, rather, a further element of the cunning plan by which he will himself entrap the Maenads.

380, where the chorus mention "laughter with the pipe" (μετά τ᾽αὐλοῦ γελάσαι); and compare the eirenic (in both senses) account of the revelers' behavior by the Messenger from 677 onwards. This difficulty—of the problematic nature of the revelers' state of mind as representing an alternative wisdom, or as aberrant and "manic" in the more usual sense—may be seen as cognate with the larger problem, explored further below, of whether the Bacchants are enjoying the blessings of the god, on the one hand, or are already suffering his punishment, on the other.

16. See Halliwell (2008) 25–38 for a range of instances of mocking laughter as a form of aggression or humiliation of the enemy, from tragedy and beyond, and 26 n. 63 specifically on heroic or tragic sensitivity to laughter.

17. On the stage representation of these two, see further n. 21 below.

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Sophocles's Ajax provides a case both opposite and parallel to that. His consciousness of having undergone an episode of madness is central to the fear of enemy laughter and mockery which obsesses him (and those close to him). So, he is horrified at the laughter he will provoke: "ah, the laughter, how I have been humiliated" (ὤμοι γέλωτος, οἷον ὑβρίσθην ἄρα, 367); and, as the chorus resignedly remark, of Ajax's arch-enemy Odysseus: "alas, he laughs a great laugh at these woes of madness" (γελᾷ δὲ τοῖσδε μαινομένοις ἄχεσιν πολὺν γέλωτα, φεῦ φεῦ, 956); they also suggest the urgent covering of the dead Ajax's body before the arrival of Menelaus, for fear he may laugh at it (1040–43).

Avoidance of enemy laughter is a fundamental—and repeatedly expressed—motivation for Medea, and an important element in her final, ghastly decision.[18] (We shall return to *Medea* again shortly.)

Fear of mockery, and even its reverse side, desire to humiliate, may seem more or less understandable to us, at least to the extent that we are able to think ourselves into the heroic code evinced by Greek tragedy. But the situation becomes still more troubling when we consider those places where we—or where someone—seem actually to be encouraged by characters in the drama to laugh at madness.

There is, naturally, some cross-over between such cases (listed as 5c above) and those just discussed under 5b. The most striking example is, in fact, that of Ajax. We just considered his dread of enemy mockery and humiliation; but let us now look in detail at the exchange between Athena and Odysseus at the beginning of the play. "Is it not the most enjoyable laughter—laughter at your enemy?" the goddess asks Odysseus (79). Two things are particularly noteworthy (and shocking) here: the direct, positive encouragement to someone to engage in watching, and laughing at, someone's madness; and the fact that it is a god who provides this encouragement. In fact, Odysseus seems taken aback at the goddess's suggestion. We have here an invitation to laugh at madness; the invitation is made by a god and refused, or at most accepted hesitantly and with reservation, by a mortal (74–88). The dramatic situation raises an interesting series of questions, for example: *Who*, if anyone, is expected to laugh? What is the relationship of an actual audience's reaction to that of a staged audience

18. Her major concern in the prospect of being caught in the attempt to kill Jason and his bride is that she would thus provide laughter to her enemies by her death (383); by the same token, she celebrates joyfully the prospect of victory over her enemies (765–67). At the moment of decision, a crucial motivation in her resolve finally to kill her children is, again, not to be mocked by her enemies for having left them unpunished (1049–51). The anxiety to avoid such mockery or insult is even extended to the children themselves: they might suffer this, if she does *not* kill them (1060–62; cf. 1378–81).

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member (here, Odysseus)? It is worth returning to the mockery scenes already mentioned from *Bacchae*, with these considerations in mind. Dionysus is undoubtedly laughing at his victim, Pentheus. The mocking laughter takes different forms; the Stranger's ability to elude Pentheus, to foil his hopes, is presented as a deliberate mockery (καθύβρισ᾽αὐτόν . . . ἐλπίσιν δ᾽ἐβόσκετο, 616–17); then Pentheus moves, or rather is moved, through successive stages of delusion and (as yet unrecognized) humiliation: outwitted by Dionysus's magical powers; tricked into believing in the efficacy of a self-destructive course of action; in the process abandoning his previous decorum; afflicted with actual hallucinations; and finally—in the scene which we see only through the Messenger's eyes—exposed mercilessly to the Bacchants' hunting frenzy, the would-be huntsman/voyeur transformed violently into prey.

But is anyone else laughing? Or is this particular kind of mad laughter the province of the supremely distant, supremely cruel gods?[19] The question is a fascinating one, leading potentially in two diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand, the gods may have a unique role in mockery and laughter at madness; but is it possible, on the other, that laughter at madness is encouraged—and indeed engaged in by the actual audience—in a way which would shock and disgust modern expectations?

To consider the first option a little further: Odysseus's refusal to be as cruel an enemy, as fierce a mocker, as his patron god encourages him to be is mirrored, in a very different context, by the scene which initiates the mad episode in *Heracles*. There, very remarkably, the actual goddess or spirit of madness, Lyssa, expresses extreme reluctance to visit herself upon such a hero as Heracles—to cause his destruction by sending him mad—and is only compelled to by Iris, the vessel of Hera's direct instruction (822–73). The absent goddess is represented as capable of a level of cruelty—perhaps of mockery—apparently here beyond the ken of a demi-god, let alone a mortal.

Before proceeding in greater detail to the variety of ways in which mad scenes are presented to the audience—and to which audience?—as potentially laughable, we should consider as relevant to the above argument another arguably divine perspective, that of Medea. As already mentioned, Medea's reluctance to allow her enemies to laugh at her fits precisely with the dynamics of the he-

19. One thinks in this context also of Aphrodite and Artemis in the *Hippolytus*. Although the punishment visited by the former—and the reaction at the end evinced by the latter—are not directly related to an instance of *madness* (on this see n. 23 below), both demonstrate vividly the distance of divine operations from mortal affairs, the "higher" level on which they operate, both in terms of the apparent disproportion of punishment and in terms of emotional distance from supposed favorites (for the latter point, see the whole scene 1389–1443).

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roic code, with its pairing, like two sides of a coin, of the two faces: desire for humiliation and dread of mockery. In fact, it provides an extreme example of it. But does this anxiety drive her into madness? We would have first to establish that her decision to kill her own children for the relevant "heroic" purpose (i.e., revenge upon or humiliation of her enemies) *is* an insane one.

In fact, Medea's behavior as presented by Euripides has very little in common with tragic madness as considered above. The feature which, at least arguably, she shares with that picture is her distorted perception of reality—or at least of normal values and indeed of her own interests. But this, as already suggested in relation to Antigone's *anoia* and Pentheus's or Hippolytus's lack of *sōphrosunē*, is not itself portrayed as madness. Undoubtedly, the dramatic mental conflict or verbalized internal dialogue (1020–80) which culminates in her fatal decision could be played as an episode of madness; and certain features—in particular heightened, frenzied action—are shared with the more typical cases. But what is rather at stake here is, precisely, *sōphrosunē*, or its absence; indeed, it is the absence of that quality that Jason accuses her of after the child-murder (1369). More generally, his rebuke to her is couched in the language of moral wickedness, hatefulness, audacity—not that of madness. Moreover, it is the very rationality of the process by which she arrives at the decision—the reasoned nature of the arguments which she is able to advance, albeit in an internal psychological conflict—which may, to us, constitute the most troubling aspect of the play.[20]

Thus, though Medea's frenzied actions—and her celestial flight, mocking and gloating over her enemies—might seem as vivid an image of tragic madness as you could wish for (and if so, the obsessive focus on mockery and its avoidance further enriches the picture we have drawn), we must do justice to the senses in which Medea does *not* count as mad: dominance of an evil urge is not the same as madness, as it is usually understood in tragedy.

There is another crucial way in which Medea departs from other tragic depictions of "mad" or madly transgressive behavior; and this is of interest too for our argument. For Medea, uniquely amongst the many child-killers of Greek tragedy, will escape with impunity—punished neither by personal remorse,

20. The episode of Medea's argument with herself indeed came to be understood as a key example of moral conflict and lack of self-restraint in philosophical literature: the shocking, and morally arresting, psychic situation whereby one knows that one is about to do evil and still chooses to do it would excite philosophical interest for centuries to come. See in particular Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 3.3–7 (5.306–338 K. = 188–214 De Lacy), arguing at length that Medea's case, properly understood, supports Plato's view of the divided soul against Chrysippus's monistic model. (For discussion of this philosophical debate in the modern literature, see especially Gill [1983] and [1998].)

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nor mortal vengeance, nor the imposition of a divine sanction. This, surely, is a function of her divine, or semi-divine, nature. Whether we see her merciless attitude to her children—and her merciless operation of reason in relation to her own psyche—as also functions of this semi-human status, we must admit that Medea is not typical of tragic madness; further, that her character seems to reinforce the sense we have of gods as capable of levels of enemy-directed gloating beyond the human.

Visual and Non-Visual Representations of Madness in Tragedy: When Can "We" Laugh?

Some mention has been made of the different ways in which madness is presented to us—directly, on stage, or by report; it is time to investigate this in more detail. The characters whom we see and hear on stage enact either the aftermath of madness, or only certain features of it—essentially, those involving distorted vision, delusion or hallucination (3a above). The distinct physical symptoms (3b)—wild eye movements and mouth frothing—as well as the violent, heightened actions (3c) are relayed to us only via third-person reports. (An exception would be the on-stage appearance of Cassandra in *Troades*, which presumably involved elements of "manic," Bacchant-style dance; but consideration of rhythm and dance, while potentially very relevant to "mad" performance, takes us into a somewhat different realm, potentially lending a "manic" dimension to otherwise "sane" actors and acting.) At one level, as already mentioned, this simply accords with Greek dramatic conventions. But it also raises further questions about audience response. How do we react to vivid accounts of off-stage madness? How do various listeners to the reports on stage react? And are these reactions essentially different from the reactions that we, or they, have to the onstage actor of madness?

We should in this context consider also an interesting transitional case, which to an extent contradicts this simple dichotomy between on-stage madness, lacking in violent physical, or at least facial, symptoms and madness which does have such symptoms but can therefore only be reported, an off-stage event. This is the case where specific physical or facial symptoms—not visible to the audience, in line with the stage conventions mentioned—are alluded to by another on-stage character. In Euripides's *Orestes*, at Orestes's meeting with Menelaus the latter relays vivid features of Orestes's appearance (especially his dried-out pupils), which are otherwise invisible to the audience, verbally (389–91); the description is partially foreshadowed by Electra's earlier account of him (41–45).

An obvious perception would be that the enactment of madness in its aftermath, or in a calm but still deluded, or partially deluded, state, will tend fairly

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straightforwardly to invite sympathy: one thinks of Orestes in his first scene in *Orestes* (211–315), partially confused, partially conscious of his situation, intermittently hallucinating; of Agave at the end of *Bacchae* (from 1233 on), her pride and confidence very gradually replaced by consciousness of a delusion, and then of the full horror of what she has done; indeed, of Ajax as first seen by Odysseus (from 91): no longer raving but still deluded as to the nature of his victims. If we find it difficult to imagine the hero Odysseus laughing at his enemy behaving absurdly and self-humiliatingly in a fit of madness, it is surely far more difficult still to imagine him laughing at the pathetic figure believing himself to have slain and entrapped his enemies. Or is this too an anachronistic perception? Does it make a difference at precisely which moment Athena offered Odysseus the "laughable" sight: during the slaughter, in the immediate aftermath, in full realization of the truth (or, indeed, in death)? It is—surely—difficult for anyone (except, presumably, Hera) to feel anything but pity and horror at Heracles as first presented to us visually after his frenzy (from *HF* 1088): bound, helpless, destroyed, deluded and about to realize the nature of his delusion.

But does this dynamic change when the mad action is not actually seen and heard, but only reported to us—and, relatedly, when the report involves a much fuller range of mad action than we may see on the actual stage?

One possibility—to return again to the nature of the relevant Greek tragic conventions—is that part of the rationale for those very conventions is the impossibility of enacting such violent actions as battles, murders—and, indeed, episodes of madness—realistically, or at least convincingly: the impossibility of enacting them *without* the action seeming ridiculous. That such dramatic on-stage action had to be avoided so as not to provoke the wrong sort of laughter. Another, to us far more disturbing, is that the mad scenes, even as relayed through messenger reports, *did in fact* provoke laughter—that they could be regarded as comic, either straightforwardly or in the sense of walking a fine and dangerous line on the boundary between horror and ridicule.

In fact, a troubled, ambiguous reaction of the latter sort is quite explicitly described, by the Messenger in *Heracles*; to be more precise, it is relayed to both the audience of *Heracles* and the on-stage audience (Amphitryo and the Chorus), as having been the reaction of members of the off-stage audience (some of Heracles's servants) to his incipient madness. "People said to each other: 'Is our master playing with us, or is he mad?'" (951–52).

At one level, this is just the initial reaction of persons who do not yet realize the enormity of the situation; but may there not be significance in the notion that madness could at first be interpreted as "playing with us"? And, even as the scene unfolds, are there not horribly comic, or at least tragi-comic, elements—the

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absent chariot and goad (947–49), the imagined places (943, 954–55, 958), the stripping and the self-proclaimed victory against nobody (959–62)?

We turn again to *Bacchae*. We have discussed already a series of scenes which represent the most powerful and intense psychological interplay, involving highly sophisticated and terrifying mental mockery; but what of the still more terrifying possibility that the Messengers' accounts of the mad behavior in the hills has—for the audiences, on stage or off—a comic dimension? We are apt to regard the moment, recounted by the second Messenger (1063–75), where Dionysus bends down a pine tree on which to seat the female-impersonating Pentheus before releasing it to expose him, high up above, to the sight and eventually to the murderous violence of his own deranged mother as the most serious, most charged, moment in any Greek messenger speech—its dramatic tension as terrible and laden with silent, somber inevitability as the literal, physical tension in that pine bough. But Dionysus's intention is, of course, to expose Pentheus to ridicule and humiliation. That moment is followed by the equally dramatic—or comic?—pulling up of the tree by its roots (1109–13), and then by the climactic dismemberment, in which various family members pull off various of Pentheus's limbs without effort, and the bare trunk remains (1125–35). The whole account is certainly capable of a horribly comic reception. Is it possible that we, the audience (on stage or off stage) may share Dionysus's enjoyment? That they, or we, laugh at Pentheus? (The answer, of course, may not be the same for each of these two audiences—or for individuals within the latter one.) The ambiguous co-presence of the comic and the solemn is suggested to us, at a much lower level of intensity, right at the outset of the drama, in the potentially laughable figures of Cadmus and Teiresias. It is, perhaps, in this troubled and troubling co-existence of the comic and the tragic that we should seek the answer to our question—however disturbing such an answer may seem.[21] Such co-existence of emotional responses is in fact explicitly described, in a scene from *Ajax*: "together with the god everyone both laughs and mourns," the chorus say (383), responding to Ajax's anxiety at mockery, already discussed above. "Either—or" accounts of whether a given scene, or character, is to be taken as tragic or comic, are, I suggest, hopelessly simplistic.

21. The point is perceptively explored—both with specific relation to Teiresias and Cadmus and more generally in relation to Euripides—by Seidensticker (2016). His summary is worth quoting: "comic and tragic [are] not mutually exclusive but that Euripides succeeds, time and again, in deepening the intended tragic meaning . . . by means of the comic" (283). On the simultaneously comic and tragic dimensions of the *Bacchae* see also Segal (1982) 254–57, with further bibliography.

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Orestes, in a number of plays, spans visual and non-visual representations of madness; and some of these too invite the question as to the presence or role of laughter. At the end of *Choephoroe*, as already mentioned, he sees demons which (at least according to a plausible view as to how this scene was staged) we do not. This seems to us powerful; could it be simultaneously laughable? The same could even arguably apply to his "pathetic" and intermittently hallucinating first appearance in *Orestes*.

In *Iphigeneia in Tauris* the account of the off-stage Orestes seems to have at least elements of comedy. Again, we note how the features of mouth-frothing, and violent wielding of the sword against animals—which could not have been presented on stage—are central features of the messenger's speech (281–312). We note, too, that the question of possible comic response should here be considered at, at least, three levels: the response of the off-stage sailors who witnessed the episode; the responses of Iphigeneia and the chorus—themselves not necessarily the same—and the response of the audience in the theatre.[22]

The "Benefits of Madness"?

Before moving to comedy, a little more on *Bacchae*. This play is of course the fullest and most direct account of madness, in particular Bacchic madness, in the extant corpus, and as such it may be expected to be more multivalent and admit less readily of the kind of neat analysis attempted in a paper such as this.

One way in which it challenges that neat picture is in the application of madness terms themselves. We have seen *mainesthai* and *mania* as temporary experiences undergone by an agent as punishment for neglecting a god, not as attributes or experiences of the agent *during* that neglect and *before* his punishment. *Bacchae* is indeed the *par excellence* example of this. Pentheus is sent mad in punishment for disdaining the god. Yet it is also true that on at least a couple of occasions he is accused of being mad *before* this visitation;

22. Detailed discussion of examples from other cultures or historical periods would take us well beyond our scope here; but it may at least be thought relevant to consider as a parallel some well-known cases of laughter at mad people in Shakespeare. Incarcerated or vagrant madmen, as well as "Bedlam beggars" feigning madness, could be targets of mockery in seventeenth-century England. Various Shakespearean characters and scenes allude to this troubling social reality; they simultaneously present us with a disconcerting complexity of possible comic response to such figures. Edgar in *King Lear* (deliberately assuming madness), Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (deliberately mis-classified as mad), perhaps most disturbingly the actually mad Lear, all present us both with certain potentially comic aspects of madness, but also, more challengingly, with the very question of the extent to which an audience (off stage or—as most strikingly in the case of Feste and Malvolio—on stage) may engage in laughter at or mockery of madness.

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that is, *mainesthai* is being attributed to him as part of his distorted, irreligious attitude. In an encounter involving counter-accusations of madness, Teiresias tells Pentheus: "you are most painfully mad; you can never get a cure for this without *pharmaka*; nor is it without *pharmaka* that you are ill" (μαίνῃ γὰρ ὡς ἄλγιστα, κοὔτε φαρμάκοις / ἄκη λάβοις ἂν οὔτ᾽ ἄνευ τούτων νοσεῖς, 326–27). Pentheus's pre-manic attitude of disrespect to the gods is, in fact (at least by Teiresias), being medicalized. The association of Pentheus's original state of mind with madness is again asserted a few lines later, after Pentheus's speech with its counter-accusation of madness and its vindictive speech against the Stranger. "Now you are already mad," says Teiresias; "even before this, you were out of your mind" (μέμηνας ἤδη: καὶ πρὶν ἐξέστης φρενῶν, 359).

The play, of course, revolves around conflicting attitudes to and perception of mental health, correct vision, insanity; and this apparently exceptional case, whereby Pentheus is accused of *mania* before he actually has this condition inflicted upon him by Dionysus, may be seen as arising from this particularly intense context of contestation and conflict. We may say, however, that in the play overall the fundamental picture remains, of madness as something specific, and as something specifically visited by Dionysus, as a punishment.

But this too leads to problems. At the center of the play is the drama of Pentheus, punished because, against the persuasion of his compatriots, he refuses or does not understand the benefits of Dionysus and his particular form of *mania*. Indeed, the play revolves around this dramatic structure and the elaboration of this moral. Yet, as we look more closely, we realize, both in what Dionysus explicitly says at the beginning of the play and at its terrible climax, that the whole of Thebes is being punished for rejection of the god. And, although we hear much lyrical exposition (in various people's mouths) of the idyllic lifestyle, and of these "benefits," this frenzied state of Agave and her sisters is *itself* a punishment inflicted by the god (32–38): it too fits the pattern laid out above of madness-as-punishment-for-transgression. This makes it problematic and troubling to work out what exactly the benefits of Dionysus are, in a "normal," non-punishment context. Those people described as behaving ecstatically and in a "Bacchic" manner in the play—however positive that description—are doing so as a direct result of Dionysus's vindictive punishment.

Dionysus in *Bacchae*—and indeed the Bacchic cult, with its close connection to dramatic festivals—are presented as providing blessings to mortals. But the sense, or the straightforwardness of the sense, in which this is so remains problematic.

Things will perhaps be easier when we turn to Old Comedy. In tragedy, one role we have seen for madness is that it is visited (along with other fatally

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destructive diseases) on mortals unable to *bend*, unable to accept features—in particular Dionysiac or erotic features—of life, bound rather on a narrow, obsessive, self-destructive pathway.[23] My argument in relation to Old Comedy is twofold. On the one hand, I suggest that it shows madness as a social ill capable of transformation and adaptation; on the other, that it depicts individual madness (sometimes explicitly so called, more often indicated as a kind of "quasi-madness") as a form of transgressive and subversive behavior with potentially positive results—which may, perhaps, be the same as saying that it shows the importance of bending, of accepting the Dionysiac—and that it shows characters who do so embracing beneficial forms of madness. This beneficial or subversive madness may also be seen as a sane—or perhaps as the only possible—reaction to a mad society. To put the two together: madness in its negative connotation (litigiousness, warmongering) is conceived not as an individual, god-sent curse, but as a social problem; and this problem may, in some cases, be solved by people enacting the mad, or quasi-mad, behavior which embraces those Dionysiac values.

Old Comedy (1): Madness as Antisocial Evil

The clearest example of something approaching full madness in Aristophanes is Philocleon in *Wasps*; this play also provides us with strong support for our argument that madness in comedy is conceptualized in relation to socio-political evils which admit of social solutions.[24]

Litigiousness, or rather jury-mania, is at the heart of the drama. It is clearly presented as a social ill and also as an actually pathological state.[25] In the latter scenes of the play, although his behavior may seem problematic (on which more

23. Phaedra's love can be seen as such a destructive disease; the Nurse at times refers to it in the language of madness (see n. 5 above) and, although it is hardly a full-fledged case of madness in the sense we have considered, it is certainly pathological (a *nosos*). It is, of course, visited by Aphrodite upon Phaedra in punishment of Hippolytus for his refusal to bend and accept the erotic life; but this is consistent with the picture we have observed of family members used as pawns in the victim's punishment.

24. The depiction of madness in *Wasps* is interestingly explored by Beta (1999), who points out a number of parallels with Euripides's *Heracles*. Beta's argument in a sense underlines the distinct nature of tragic and comic madness, because if his argument is accepted the clearest explicit portrayal in comedy is in fact an example of tragic imitation or paratragedy. On *Wasps* see also the contributions of Sarah Hobe and Ian Ruffell in this volume.

25. The term *nosos* is used of Philocleon's condition (71, 87, 114) and also of the corresponding social disease—"an old disease, innate to the city," and one "whose cure requires more ingenuity than a comic poet" may possess (650–51).

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shortly), those around him have found a social solution to his antisocial—and mad—behavior; and it is this social solution that constitutes his cure.[26]

Clouds also begins with the presentation of a destructive vice. Pheidippides's mania for horses and gambling is a disease (νόσος, 243); but it is also a social evil—it has disastrous consequences for the family finances—which admits of a social solution. Either Strepsiades or Pheidippides needs to be re-educated to enable a different interaction with society. This premise in fact sets up a dramatic structure whereby a series of kinds of behavior is satirized as both crazy and morally or socially destructive.

In the end, Strepsiades explicitly acknowledges his previous madness in having accepted the morally distorted world-view and claims of the Phrontisterion,[27] and proceeds to a violent social solution—one apparently approved by the morality of the play—by burning it down. His first suggested solution to the consequences of Pheidippides's disease—that of allowing the Sophists to take over education—is considered, and rejected. The second solution, which involves the rejection of the Sophists and a return to traditional morality, may seem to leave the initial problem unresolved; but at least it leaves us with a return to a humanly—and Dionysiacally—acceptable interaction with society.

We have seen the jury-mania of *Wasps* as a social evil which Aristophanes presents also as a form of mental disease. But of course the most serious and recurrent social madness we meet in the plays is the war between Athens and Sparta, and the failure of the citizens to stop it.[28] War is explicitly associated with *mainesthai* or *mania* in *Lysistrata*: by the chorus, describing the women

26. The question of "cure", and of the significance of the final scenes of *Wasps*, has been controversial; on this see e.g. Vaio (1971), Sidwell (1990), and the contribution of Sarah Hobe in this volume; and see further below.

27. οἴμοι παρανοίας—ὡς ἐμαινόμην ἄρα, "ah, my delusion—how mad I was", 1476. (His admiration for the teaching of the Phrontisterion was already identified as a sort of derangement—οὐκ εὖ φρονεῖς—by Pheidippides at 817).

28. Here, and indeed throughout my account of Aristophanic madness and sanity, I may be accused of simplifying, and even of prejudging in a certain direction, the contentious question of Aristophanes's political perspective, and the extent to which any of his characters' political views are to be taken at face value. But it is sufficient for my argument that the plays do, in certain contexts, depict society as mad and that they do, further, present certain kinds of quasi-mad behavior as a sane or appropriate response to that madness—even if the political point of view behind this response is not a consistent one and cannot be straightforwardly summarized. For a nuanced analysis of this problem of Aristophanic authorial voice, and political perspective, see Rosen (2010). See also Ruffell (2011), who explores the notions of anti-realism and "comic impossibility" in Aristophanic comedy (as well as its Dionysiac and festive elements), in a way which nevertheless maintains its capacity to function at some level as political critique.

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as "rescuing Greece and the citizens from war and madness" (342) and by Lysistrata, suggesting that "we stop them going to the market in armour and raving (μαινομένους)" (555–56). So too, at least by implication, by the slave addressing the audience in the opening scene of *Peace* (55).[29] Here, then, we have madness as social ill, a sickness of the state; and it is a madness that requires that—at least in the transgressive, burlesque, experimental world of comedy—it may be cured by certain kinds of social intervention.

Old Comedy (2): Embracing Madness, Madness as "Sane" Reaction

But the last text mentioned is also instructive for our purposes in a different way—and one which introduces a further complexity. "My master is mad in a new way—not like you, but in another, *very* new way." The "old way" seems clearly to refer to the continuation of the war—the social madness which we have already observed. The "new way" involves a series of bizarre and crazy ways to get up to the heavens, using first ladders and eventually a dung beetle. Yet this new madness turns out to be sane. It is efficacious. They do make it to heaven, and a peace is finally negotiated that the old madness did not allow. This sane result could only come about as a result of Trygaios's "madness."

So, in our comic world, it is not only the case that madness may be understood as a political ill, admitting of a political solution; it also turns out that madness may cure madness.

While turning now to *Lysistrata* for a similar example, we must at the same time make an important qualification, which affects our argument about the comic embracing of madness more generally. The *explicit l*anguage of madness is not used in relation to the way Lysistrata and her fellow-conspirators behave; and this qualification applies also to a range of other comic examples which we also wish to consider. What we are faced with in these contexts, rather, is a number of central comic characters engaging in action which *would* be perceived and defined as mad, in normal or non-comic scenarios—and doing so in ways which are of central significance to the drama.

Lysistrata and her comrades take over the seat of government and the treasury, fight physically with a male army, and force the men of the city to negotiate. All this would—if considered as real-life action in actual fifth-century Athenian society, rather than as staged, carnivalesque behavior—be perceived not just as

29. The chorus addressing the audience as "mindless ones" (ὦνόητοι, *Ran. 734*) is less clear in its immediate reference, that is in what kind of "mindlessness" is meant; but again it seems to be hinted that insanity is a property of the populace as a whole.

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politically subversive, but as deranged. Such behavior could, indeed, be seen as according with the symptoms of literal madness discussed above in the tragic context, in particular those considered under 3a (deluded perception of reality), and possibly also under 3c (pathologically heightened and violent activity). The same applies to Dikaiopolis in the *Acharnians*: the belief that one can negotiate one's own private peace, declare one's own mini-state within Athens with its own rules unaffected by the war, is (again, if considered in terms of literal reality) a clear case of delusion or derangement. Yet, in dramatic terms, it is presented as a comic, "higher" insanity which transcends and combats the everyday, petty insanity of the war. In this sense, both Lysistrata and her companions, and Dikaiopolis, present us with mad behavior which is at the same time the only sane reaction to a mad society.[30]

But also, of course, more than just a reaction—rather, an exuberant, relentless mockery. So that, indeed, the "Mockery of Madness" again takes center stage, but now in reverse. To put it grammatically: the objective genitive of that phrase (in tragedy) has been replaced—within the transformed logic of the comic world—by a subjective one. Mad people—mad people explicitly so described, like Trygaios, as well as people behaving in obviously mad or quasi-manic ways—now have licence to mock the normal and the powerful of society, rather than the other way around. And in some cases—again through the transformative logic of Comedy—derive power and gain success from doing so. A mad, manic, or quasi-manic person may, in Comedy, be the maker of laughter—the person who directs it, rather than its object.[31]

At a more frivolous level, the action of *Thesmophoriazusae* is relevant here, too—more frivolous, because what is at stake is simply the saving of Euripides from an angry mob of women, not the peace of the state. Here, it is not only that we might regard the Kinsman's attempted infiltration of the women's festival as insane; much more specifically, we can see it as directly mirroring in comic form an action which is defined in tragedy as quite clearly that of an insane and deranged man—namely that of Pentheus in *Bacchae*.[32] Indeed, the two characters, in their

30. It seems relevant here to consider the point made by Ian Ruffell in his contribution to this volume that women in comedy are never accused of madness.

31. On the historical notion of the *gelōtopoios* and its social, literary and satirical significance, see Halliwell (2008). The answer to the question, who directs, as opposed to who is the butt of, mocking laughter, is often a complex and unstable one. The fascinating role of Hephaestus in this context is explored by Edith Hall in her contribution to this volume.

32. By "mirroring" here I do not intend to imply something temporally subsequent: the *Bacchae* of course postdates *Thesmophoriazusae*. But the point surely stands, as regards Euripides's understanding of the nature of religiously transgressive acts and their relationship to madness.

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different dramatic genres and contexts, perform precisely equivalent social acts. In both cases, we have an explicit, almost obsessive, focus on cross-dressing; in both, a looming consciousness of the dread consequences of simultaneous transgression of religious and gender taboos by illicit attendance at an all-female ritual event. Further, the sacrificial act performed on the wineskin involves a comic version of the kind of delusion we have seen in tragedy—and which we see most terribly in *Bacchae*—where a human sacrificial victim is mistaken for an animal one, or vice versa.[33] Of course, *Thesmophoriazusae*, with its central focus on Euripides, both as character and as textual presence, is the paratragic play *par excellence*. But there is a much more specific relevance to our theme: in its ludic adoption of all the above motifs, *Thesmophoriazusae* seems clearly to play with and reverse tragic notions of madness. And, again, the Kinsman's madness, or quasi-madness, leads not to his destruction but to some form of success.

We should also consider a further aspect: how such "only sane mad responses" are presented as connected with Dionysus. *Lysistrata* ends with a celebration of peace and reconciliation which invokes Dionysiac revelry (explicitly at 1284 and 1312); and the combination of alcohol and lustfulness with which Dikaiopolis celebrates the fruits of his peace in *Acharnians* is undeniably Bacchic.

To return again to the behavior of Philocleon in his later appearance in *Wasps*. It is sometimes asked whether he is cured, or rather still sick, but with his sickness somehow transformed or subverted. One answer, surely, is that his drunken and erotically-charged behavior, from 1326 onwards, embraces Dionysus (and in that sense madness) in a way which is both acceptable within a comic festival and regarded as socially positive—at least as an antidote to his inhuman, purely destructive jury-mania.

There are, then, in the world of Comedy, manners and forms of socialization which also constitute, in a sense, the embracing of madness. And that sense is a Dionysiac one.

Epilogue: The Masks of Madness

I conclude with some consideration of the role and significance of masks in the tragic and comic dramatization of madness, in the hope that this may enrich our view of the physicality of and approach to madness in Greek drama. Much has been written on Greek dramatic masks, some of it more concerned with modern recreations or practical uses,[34] some of it, even while purely historical, unavoidably speculative. The problems of evidence for fifth-century Greek

33. A similar point might be made in relation to the elaborate double-entendre of *Acharnians*, with young girls being sold as if they were pigs.

34. See in particular McCart (2007), Wiles (2007).

masks may be briefly summarized as follows: (1) the much later date of our only detailed description in a literary source; (2) the paucity of visual images from approximately the right period depicting dramatic performances; (3) the difficulties of interpretation which the latter involve.[35]

The closest approximation to fifth-century comic masks in any ancient artefact seems to be that offered by the "New York Group" terracotta figurines,[36] alongside some images on early fourth-century vases. Conscious of the methodological difficulties and the inevitability of speculative elements in the argument, I rely on these images in conjunction with cautious use of the later literary source mentioned, Pollux's *Onomasticon*. The few remarks that I make on their basis, in relation to our contrast between tragic and comic madness, will surely not be conclusive; indeed, they cannot, and do not claim to, escape being labelled by the phrase already used above—"unavoidably speculative." But they may at least be suggestive of some possibilities.

It is often stated that the masks of Old Comedy were grotesque, undergoing a change in the direction of the "realistic" in New Comedy. This proposition seems to me to be dubious, at least when thus simply stated. The change, to the extent that we can identify it, seems rather to be towards a kind of mask indicative of comic *types*, as opposed to a more neutral, though undoubtedly still grotesque, mask for Old Comedy.[37] It is at least arguable that a comic type-mask, with its

35. While we are surely right, as Csapo (2010) persuasively argues, to reject any methodology which denies in absolute and arbitrary terms the possibility of reading visual images as representing theatre practice, we are still left with considerable problems of detail. It is not in all cases clear whether the character in an image is masked or not; our images, for comedy, proliferate at a considerably later period, when, even if they are taken to depict performance style accurately, that style may be rather that of Middle or New Comedy; some of our clearest depictions of masks (most notably on the Pronomos Vase) show them off the face, rather than being worn, which again makes them difficult to "read"; one must consider the sometimes problematic question of nature and function of the physical object depicting the mask, rather than reading it straightforwardly as a representation (this is especially true of the votive masks that again proliferate in the post-classical period); it is not always clear—or, perhaps, legitimate to decide—to what extent an image is a portrayal of a theatrical performance, rather than of the myth which inspired the performance. The latter point is well discussed by Green (1994) 50–61, who also gives a very useful survey of the visual evidence in general; see also Taplin (1993); Csapo and Slater (1994); and still useful is Webster (1951).

36. See Green (1994) 35–36. As he suggests: "That is what the characters in Aristophanes's later plays looked like."

37. The evidence of Pollux is difficult to read here. He makes a broad contrast (4.143) between the masks of Old Comedy which "to a large extent imitated or portrayed in grotesque form the particular persons represented" (ὡς τὸ πολὺ τοῖς προσώποις ὧν ἐκωμῴδουν ἀπεικάζετο ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ γελοιότερον ἐσχημάτιστο) and those of New Comedy, which are divided into a range of character types. But, just before this, the text has given a range of formalized character types for tragedy too, followed by the remark that "these may also be comic masks" (4.142). If this remark is to be taken

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generic constraints, presents a *less* realistic image than an Old-Comedy mask. But talk of realism is in any case surely misleading, the distinction being, rather, precisely that between a more neutral (i.e., less differentiated) kind of mask and a more specific one.

In any case, the main visual evidence just mentioned supports the essentially grotesque nature of the masks of Old Comedy. The terracotta figurines in particular make clear the exaggeratedly wide, but flat, grin; and the clearest of the vase evidence displays both that and the wide eyes and heightened eyebrows of at least most comic characters.[38] The expression combines the suggestion of heightened emotion with a neutrality—which indeed must be a central feature of dramatic masks in general—between specific emotions, enabling the character to move between anger, joy, lustfulness, disappointment, etc.[39] This neutrality also, I suggest, crucially brings with it the possibility of transition between creator and object of ridicule—between laugher and person laughed at.[40]

Such a mask, admitting of the possibilities both of outrageous and *laughable* behavior and of a character *laughing at* others, seems to me consonant with the notion of embracing madness which I have identified in Old Comedy.[41]

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as applying to *all* the tragic masks just listed, then the consequence for Old Comedy masks seems to be that they are equally type-based as all other masks, tragic and New Comic—apart from the proviso about their function in caricaturing particular persons, which is difficult to square with this information. It remains the case, at least, that the typology for New Comedy has a more specific range of subdivisions, in line with the standard characters which had emerged in that genre. It is tempting, too (perhaps at the risk of over-reading), to take the phrase ἐπὶ τὸ γελοιότερον in the above quotation to refer to a more grotesque style in Old, as opposed to New, Comic masks in general.

38. See in particular the Tarentine red-figure bell-kraters, New York, coll. Fleischman F93 and Würzburg H5697, Green (1994) 46 and 64, respectively.

39. The notion of neutrality may in a sense seem to be undermined by the possibility (see n. 37 above) that some masks caricatured specific individuals. Whatever the value of Pollux's evidence on this point, I take it this would at best apply only in the fairly few cases where there is clear reference to a well-known historical person (e.g. Cleon in *Knights*, Socrates in *Clouds*). It will thus not be directly relevant to the central "everyman" characters, such as Dikaiopolis, Philocleon, Lysistrata, Kinsman, Trygaios, whom my argument here mainly concerns.

40. For discussion of comic masks as *objects* of ridicule, as opposed to *expressing* amusement, see Halliwell (2008) 544, arguing against the latter possibility (citing Aristotle, *Poet.* 5, 1449a35–37 on the "ugly and distorted" nature of the masks; cf. also Foley (2000), and Revermann (2006) 145–59 on comic ugliness). But Halliwell's insistence on the former option seems to me to miss the dual nature which is, precisely, central to the nature of such masks.

41. It is tempting to mention here the concept of melancholy, which was in ancient thought a striking case of a mental affliction spanning extremes—of joy and sadness, of heightened action and despondency. The connection may seem suggestive for Old Comedy, though unfortunately the term would be anachronistic in this usage, for these plays; and, in any case, it might be dangerous to reason from the "classic" text we have on this notion of melancholy, the Aristotelian *Problems* 30 (itself of unclear date) and popular conceptions of mental aberration.

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But, again, how does this differ from the masks of tragedy, which again must presumably allow for wide transitions of emotion?

The masks of tragedy—while in a sense equally neutral in their capacity for range of emotion—will lack the wide-stretched grimace, or grin, of Old Comedy, with its intrinsic suggestion of exaggerated emotional response. It is this latter, I suggest, which allows the range of emotions and reactions appropriate for the embracing of madness—for an ordinary citizen's crazed but sane reaction, for his direction of the mockery. The tragic mask, by contrast, will not lend itself readily to such heightened, crazed emotions or actions.

But how, then, *is* tragic madness portrayed through masks? The answer to this is twofold. First, as we have seen, it is in general *not* depicted on stage, in its truly manic, violent manifestation. (This contrasts with the comic equivalent—the revelrous insanity of a Dikaiopolis, a Philocleon or of the characters at the end of the *Lysistrata* is indeed enacted openly in mask on the stage.) When it is portrayed on stage, it is usually in its subdued, post-manic phase (we saw that the corybantic phase of Cassandra in *Troades* may be an exception).

But it is not just that such a post-manic or less extreme form of madness requires a more normal or neutral mask. There is another possibility. This is that the very temporary quality of tragic madness actually required a particular, temporary mask. Of course, as just observed, the *most* temporary and episodic phase of madness is, overwhelmingly, not shown on stage, and so would not require a mask at all. But even if this most extreme form of madness is generally not seen, it might still be that the actor wore a different mask for onstage madness—for the phase of madness that *is* shown—from that worn for the same character's sane appearances. Such a switching of masks, for this particular purpose, is certainly possible for some of the scenes involving mad people in the tragic corpus. Evidence pointing towards it as at least a possibility is again found in Pollux, who mentions, admittedly not masks representing madness, specifically, but masks representing disease.[42]

It seems likely, then, that there were pathological masks, for temporary states, alongside the more normal types—old man, young man, etc. We may visualize a number of tragic scenes in this light.[43] Orestes in *Orestes* would be such a case: he is clearly sick, or recuperating, in his first scene, and might have the diseased

42. At 4.136–37 Pollux mentions a series of masks, under the heading of youthful masks within tragedy, some of which seem to show apparently pathological features, distinguished especially in terms of complexion. In particular, the ὠχρός ("pale" or "sallow"), which is described as "morbid in complexion" and the related πάρωχρος, which "is in other respects like that of the 'all-round good' character, but through its sallowness indicated one who is sick or in love."

43. This possible use of mad masks in tragedy is discussed in some detail by Most (2013).

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or mad mask throughout it. This would provide a contrast with his later, sane appearance. Conversely, Heracles would enter with his normal, or heroic, mask at his first appearance in *Heracles*, and reappear with the diseased or mad mask after his catastrophic episode. (And it would, perhaps, lend added power to the drama that these masks, while depicting sorrow and indeed sickness of mind, only hint at the extreme state of madness, the terrible pathology which took place off stage and is only available to us via report.) Ajax would, then, also appear with a mad, or pathological, mask at his first entrance; it would then be an interesting question, whether he retains this throughout, or appears changed in the scene leading to his suicide.

In *Bacchae* the situation is—once again—more complicated. It has already been suggested elsewhere[44] that the actor of Agave was the same one who played Pentheus, and that the "head" which she cradles in her lap at the end is in fact the *prosōpon* which he himself wore when playing Pentheus earlier. But even that, we must now consider, does not do justice to the mask-based complexity. The actor does indeed carry the mask that he previously wore as Pentheus—but this may not be the *only* mask that he wore in this role. It could rather be the mask of mad Pentheus. And although, as discussed above, the transition to Pentheus's madness is a gradual one, the moment for the change seems quite clear from the text. In the first phase of his crucial dialogue with the Stranger (787–846) Pentheus is confused and deceived, but not actually deranged. When he reappears for the second phase of this encounter (912–70), he sees two suns and two cities of Thebes, as well as suffering from other delusions. It is at this moment, I suggest, that he will reappear with a mad mask (and indeed one of the functions of the placement of the chorus between the two scenes is to enable not just a costume change—Pentheus is now in feminine attire—but a change of mask too).

To return to the final scene: the mask of Agave herself here (if the conclusions of the argument so far are accepted) will also be a mad, or pathological, mask. So, the spectator of this terrible last scene watches an actor both wearing one and carrying another mad mask, the latter being that which he also previously wore (at his final, but not his first, appearance as Pentheus).

These suggestions, though they must remain speculative, seem at least highly plausible for the original productions of these plays, provided one accepts, with Pollux, the existence of a distinct set of masks for diseased states.[45]

44. See Taplin (1993); the notion of significant doubling, in particular between characters with a familial relationship (including this case) was also previously explored by Pavlovskis (1977) and Jouan (1983).

45. Incidentally Phaedra—pathological but not actually mad, as already discussed—will on such an interpretation wear a diseased mask throughout her performance; as seen above (n. 42), the morbid

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A contrast on this basis between the practice of tragedy and that of comedy seems also plausible, though again it is far from provable. Martin Revermann indeed suggests a number of places in Old Comedy which may have involved mask changes. Yet it seems to me that, while undoubtedly a transformed appearance of certain central characters in comedies is well established, because explicitly noted by other characters in the play, such transformations can be understood as applying to the physicality of the character's body more generally; that is, they would be costume changes, leaving open the possibility that the same neutral, and in its own nature transformable, mask was worn throughout. It is interesting that the only clear case adduced of a change of *facial* appearance being remarked by another character, as far as I can see, is that of Pheidippides in *Clouds* (1167)—interesting because Revermann himself identifies strong elements of "paratragedy" in this passage.[46] If, then, Pheidippides *did* enter with a pale, pathological mask at this point, such a piece of staging might represent an element of tragic parody, rather than normal comic practice.

These considerations about the use of masks in tragedy and comedy are not, to be sure, central to our overall thesis. The contrast here suggested, however, would, if accepted, further support the interpretation—and indeed the representation—of madness as temporary, episodic, pathological and destructive in tragedy, as well as the reversal by which it then appears in comedy, by contrast open-ended, polysemic, multivalent—and capable of uniting us with Dionysiac joy.[47]

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appearance of being in love is explicitly mentioned by Pollux. (There are, as pointed out to me by the anonymous reviewer, cases of tragic mask change much more clearly supported by Pollux than those proposed here, for example that of Actaeon, whose appearance with an elaborate special mask as a stag in Aeschylus's *Toxotides* must have come after his appearance in human form. It seems that some of Pollux's other "special masks"—on which see further Sutton (1984)—would also have been used for individual scenes rather than throughout a play, e.g. that of "shorn Achilles" in the *Myrmidons*. But, while such cases may indeed be clearer, this use of the special masks to show transformation in a character does not seem to me to preclude a similar use for pathological masks, or masks associated with sickness.)

46. Revermann (2006) 232. Other places where Revermann suggests a possible change of mask are *Acharnians* 1189; *Knights* 1331; *Birds* 1718.

47. I am extremely grateful to the organizers of the conference in Patras in September 2016, George Kazantzidis and Natalia Tsoumpra, for their generous invitation; and to both them and the other participants at the conference—and also, in particular, to Kostas Valakas—for the stimulating discussions and presentation of questions, in response to which the present chapter eventually developed. I also acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Wellcome Trust for the research project during the course of which it was written.

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